

## Earliest instruments in the world



Bone flutes are between 42,000 and 43,000 years old. The oldest ones come from a cave in southern Germany. We don't know why people needed them, but they were probably important for rituals or relaxation. It is also possible that music kept large groups of people closely connected, because they listened to music, and spent time together.



Instruments which make a sound when you hit them are called percussions. The oldest such instrument is the elephant skin drum, which is 37,000 years old. Drums came to Africa from Asia a long time ago. They only became popular in Europe because of soldiers, some 500 years ago.



Pan pipes are one of the oldest instruments, dating back 30,000 years. People made them from bamboo or giant cane. Their name is more recent: it is from a Greek myth in which the rustic god Pan plays it for fun and during parties.



The bullroarer (or rhombus) was important not just in rituals, but also as a way to communicate over large distances. The oldest ones are from Ukraine, and they are at least 19,000 years old. It is a simple, flat piece of wood tied with a string. The roaring sound comes when you swing the instrument in the air.



The rattles are from Egypt. They were hollow pieces of wood filled with sand and small stones. When you rhythmically shook the instrument, it made a dry, rolling sound. Rattles are at least 13,000 years old.



The oldest xylophone is 4,000 years old and comes from southeast Asia. The original instrument had wooden bars on hollow gourds (a type of vegetable). Today, we have metal tubes instead of gourds to create the sound. However, we still place the bars so they look like ladder and hit them with mallets.

**Questions and tasks:**

- 1 What were the first materials from which people made instruments?
- 2 Where did people use them? What did they use them for?
- 3 Sort the instruments into the percussion and wind sections. Why aren't there any stringed instruments?
- 4 Can you play any instrument? If yes, which one? If no, which do you like to listen to?
- 5 Find out about the history of your favourite musical instrument.